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VISION DEVELOPMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING
Is There A Better Way?

by

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and assess the effectiveness of the vision creation and deployment process advocated in typical total quality programs. A quality vision is a description or an image of the future that stems from the present and improves upon it. It is a target for an organization to strive toward both individually and collectively. The question I want to answer is: What is vision development and is it likely to make a difference in organizational performance? The visioning process is a part strategic planning that identifies goals and objectives and the means and methods to achieve them. This paper reexamines the value of vision development, as part of strategic planning, and its place in quality implementation. Focusing research on component parts of the quality philosophy can help identify the relative value of each component and how well it fits into different organizational structures.

There is a need for a critical look into the individual elements that make up quality efforts. Up to two-thirds of American managers believe total quality has failed in their organizations. Applicants are rapidly decreasing for the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and consultants are now making money repairing failed total quality attempts.¹ Combined research of the prestigious firms of Arthur D. Little, Ernst & Young, Rath & Strong, and McKinsey and Co. show that only between one-fifth and one-third of all total quality programs in the US and Europe achieve significant or tangible improvements in quality, productivity, financial returns, or competitiveness. An obvious reason is that total quality focuses too much on internal processes than on external results.² McKinsey and Co. concluded that many failed programs lack results orientation and insufficient linkage with the strategic priorities of the organization. They also cite the fact that 750 of the 1,000 points contained in the Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria

¹ Rahul Jacob, "TQM, More Than A Dying Fad?" Fortune Magazine, (October 18, 1993), p.66.

are devoted to internal processes, leading to too much internal focus.³ A renewed emphasis on effective strategic planning and visioning, considering a wide range of possible outcomes, can open an organization's field of view and identify opportunities and problem areas earlier than otherwise possible. Taking the time to focus on the critical first step in quality implementation might save costly problems down the road.

While there is ample anecdotal evidence that total quality efforts may produce impressive results, there is also ample evidence that total quality efforts can produce disastrous results. In fact, an entire "TQM repair work" industry is fueled by TQM "miscarriages and abortions" caused by well meaning organizations that tried total quality by the book.⁴ Implementation problems are also surfacing across the Federal Government because results are not matching up to the hype.⁵ For example, in 1988, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) praised the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) total quality work and designated it a prototype quality improvement agency for others to emulate. A survey conducted by *Fortune* magazine three years later revealed that EEOC was one of the ten least respected agencies in the federal government. It is time for rigorous analysis and assessment of the components of total quality to determine which parts produce desired results and why. We also need to find out if total quality efforts should be tailored to specific environments instead of the one size fits all, prepackaged solution approach. This paper is a move in that direction.

The paper also seeks to answer the following questions: What is the purpose of strategic planning? How does the vision development process fit in? How can you best harness the power

² Oren Harari, "Ten Reasons Why TQM Doesn't Work," Management Review (January, 1993), p.33.

³ Phil Pifer, Principal, McKinsey & Company, in a letter published in and the article "How the Baldrige Award Really Works," Harvard Business Review (November-December, 1991), p.80.

⁴ Jay Matthews, "Totaled Quality Management," Washington Post, (June 6, 1993)s pp. H1-H16.

⁵ Beryl A. Radin and Joseph N. Coffee, "A Critique of TQM: Problems of Implementation in the Public Sector," Public Administration Quarterly, Vol. 17 (Spring, 1993), p.42.

of individuals through this process? Is it beneficial to develop personal visions while you develop the organizations vision? What is the best method for developing both personal and organizational visions? Finally, how do you keep visions alive and relevant to everyone involved?

WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING AND WHY DO WE NEED TO DO IT?

Planning is a process where goals are established and the means and methods to achieve those goals are identified. These goals can be characterized as intended future outcomes. Planning is also a decision making process that must consider many internal and external variables that impact whether these goals can be attained using available means and methods. Short range planning can cover anything from the next few hours to the next few months. Long range planning typically covers anything from one to ten years.⁶ Strategic planning should generally cover the period from 10-25 years into the future.⁷ As you plan farther into the future, the environment, methods, means, and relevance of these intended future outcomes becomes less certain.

Imagine yourself in the early 1980's at the Pentagon's office of Studies and Analysis planning for strategic nuclear defense of the United States in the years 1995 to 2010. I know because I was there. My specific job was to conduct studies and analyses and to recommend the best way to penetrate enemy air defenses with a mixture of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), cruise missiles, and bombers. I also had to consider the best mix of bombers and cruise missiles by type, payload, etc. which affected force structure and procurement decisions. The demand

⁶ Leonard D. Goldstein, et.al., Applied Strategic Planning (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993) pp. 1-4.

⁷ Perry M. Smith, "Creating A Strategic Vision" in Air University Review (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, September/October 1986)pp. 16-17.

for specificity today about a world 15-25 years into the future results in relying on many assumptions.

I fell into the trap of assuming that the strategic military balance tomorrow would simply be a higher tech version of what we had today. I would have been much more effective if I had been better schooled in the process of strategic planning and visioning. Although it is unlikely that I would have predicted the fall of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of much of our nuclear and conventional capabilities, I would have considered it in the range of possible futures.⁸ If you have at least considered the ramifications of an alternate future, however unlikely, you will be better prepared to recognize indicators leading to that future and can react quicker and more effectively once it is upon you. In other words, you will be less likely to proceed into an uncertain future with blinders on. This is as applicable to the business world as it is to the business of national defense.

Shareholders reading IBM's 1984 Annual Report found a warning from the CEO that IBM must be careful not to let the personal computer business distinct them from their main reason for being ... the mainframe. No wonder it was upstart Apple Computer that established the personal computer in the American mainstream, both in terms of the hardware as a home and business "appliance" and establishing the graphical user interface as standard. Even its co-founder, Steve Wozniak, had to leave Hewlett Packard because they did not share his vision of a possible future where the mainframe and minicomputer were not where most information processing occurs. A similar situation occurred with the team that developed the IBM PC. They had to do so in Florida, pushed away from the "real" IBM like a poor stepchild.

⁸ Unknown to me, at the same time the Long Range Planning shop led an effort to create alternate futures. One future envisioned the demise of the Soviet Union. Air Force Innovation Study, Washington D.C. (1984).

Imagine trying to convince General Motors' executives in the mid 1960's that there is a possible future where consumers demand quality and reliability above styling and planned obsolescence, and the Japanese were going to drive them to the brink if they didn't change. General Motors executives were convinced that cars were primarily status symbols and that they were in the business of making money, not cars. They also assumed the US car market was somehow insulated from the rest of the world. No wonder the Japanese and Germans increased their share of the US market from near zero to 38% by 1986.⁹ How about asking Texaco to imagine a future where just about everyone would pump their own gas to save a few cents a gallon, and would pay more for the convenience to buy groceries at the same time. My brother is in the garment business. Many in his industry were surprised and amazed that both NAFTA and GATT passed within a year. They couldn't imagine a future where their congressional delegation would not protect them from overseas competition. They now have plants, equipment, and a work force that will shortly become irrelevant. In today's world, inventories must be kept low (or non-existent) and the rate of change and innovation rapid unless companies and industries want to end up like the rust belt of the mid-west. Corporations that make decisions whose foundations lie in a poor strategic planning process are simply not fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities to their shareholders and employees. The need for improved planning is now widely recognized in government and industry.

The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (Public Law 103-62 (S.20)) requires each agency to submit a strategic plan to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. The plan must cover at least five years and be updated every three years. These plans must include:

⁹ Peter M. Senge, The Fifth Discipline, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1990), p.176.

- A comprehensive mission statement
- General goals and objectives, including outcome related goals
- A description of how the goals and objectives will be achieved
- A description of how the performance related goals are related to the goals and objectives
- Identification of any external barriers
- A description of how the program will be evaluated¹⁰

The Malcom Baldrige National Quality Award has become the embodiment of what American business believes to be the most important factor in becoming more competitive and successful. The award criteria is used as a road map for companies and Government activities that want to unlock the quality secrets and apply them to their organization. The GAO recently conducted a study to determine whether application of the principles contained in the Baldrige criteria actually produced tangible results. The study concluded that there was a definite cause and effect relationship between improved corporate performance and application of the Baldrige principles.¹¹ The Air Force recently mandated Quality Air Force (QAF) Criteria, a slightly modified version of Baldrige, to be used in unit self assessments. The message is: If you are not doing business like criteria says you ought to, you're doing it wrong.

Leadership is the first category of Baldrige criteria and often cited as the key to a successful quality implementation. The Quality Council, which includes quality executives from some of the leading US corporations, developed some guidelines to help CEOs decide how much time to devote to specific areas. Their guidelines recommend a CEO devote fully 10-20% of their time to providing strategic direction, planning, and customer focus and only 5-20% monitoring and evaluating operations. The strategic planning and visioning process is viewed as key to remaining competitive and successful in today's business climate.¹²

¹⁰ Public Law 103-62 IS-201: August 3, 1983, Section 3 "Strategic Planning."

¹¹ David A. Garvin, "How the Baldrige Award Really Works," in Harvard Business Review, (November-December, 1991), p. 80.

¹² Ibid., p. 90.

Effective strategic planning and visioning increases the likelihood of improved investments leading to better business results. If we had recognized the indicators leading up to the collapse of communism and the Gulf War, DoD might have invested more money in precision guided munitions and less in strategic nuclear weapons that we are now cutting up for scrap. Even Shell Oil in the early 1980's was contemplating scenarios whereby the Soviet Union collapses. This was at a time when the former head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov, was in power. However unlikely, Shell did so to position themselves favorably in the world oil market and looked for indicators along the way. These indicators presented themselves over the next few years and Shell made decisions that poised them favorably in comparison to their competitors. In contrast, the entertainment industry fought against providing videotapes of movies throughout the seventies because they thought it would kill the theater business. Now with both theaters and videos providing historic revenues, they realize how many millions they lost in the process.¹³

WHAT IS A VISION AND WHY DO WE NEED ONE?

An organizational vision is also a picture of what the organization could look like and what it might accomplish in a possible future. The future described by the vision is typically where the organization's leaders want to be. The leaders believe achieving the vision is possible if the organization commits the energy and resources to get there and their assumptions about outside influences prove to be true. A quality vision is based on knowledge of the present and what the leaders believe is possible for the organization to achieve after total quality is instituted. It's an image that becomes a target the organization directs resources and energy to achieve.

¹³ Peter Schwartz, The Art Of The Long View, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 47-48; 204.

You don't see a vision with your eyes, you see it with your mind. The words of a vision statement are not as important as the mental picture created and carried in the minds of the members of the organization. A vision statement will remain two dimensional until people in the organization begin to absorb the ideas and concepts behind it to the point that they mentally visualize the future state as if it were real today. An effective vision can be a call to action that energizes individuals throughout the organization to devote their best toward a common dream. It does so by being logical and plausible while simultaneously being creative enough to capture the imaginations of individual members.¹⁴

Steve Jobs of Apple Computer created one of the most powerful visions of the 1980's. He helped create Apple Computer with the vision of bringing the power of computing to ordinary people. Arguably, he and Steve Wozniak created the personal computer industry. The vision Jobs developed in the early 1980's was a personal computer with a user interface anyone could understand and hardware that anyone could set up right out of the box. The vision he created was the personal computer as a home and business appliance much like the telephone. The Macintosh transformed Apple, the personal computer industry, and the way millions of individuals think of and use personal computers. Jobs created a mental picture in the minds of the Macintosh development team and later the entire corporation without issuing a vision statement. The development team devoted almost their entire waking lives to the project for well over two years at salary levels that were just barely average in Silicon Valley. The power of this vision was succinctly demonstrated when Jobs convinced John Sculley to throw away 16 years at

¹⁴ Neil H. Snyder and Michelle Graves, "Leadership and Vision," Business Horizons, Vol. 37 (Jan-Feb 1994), pp. 1-7.

PepsiCo and a real shot at its CEO by asking “Do you want to continue to sell sugared water or do you want to change the world?”¹⁵

Adolph Hitler created an extremely powerful vision of the “Thousand Year Reich.” He did this through a series of speeches and his book “Mein Kampf.” This vision moved the country to achieve the greatest military victories the world had seen since the days of Napoleon and Alexander the Great. It also moved large groups of people to commit crimes that they would never consider individually as human beings.

Another powerful example is the “I Have A Dream” speech by Dr Martin Luther King. In this speech he described a future where people work and live together without regard for race. Millions understood his description of this possible future and could accurately describe what he meant in their own words. He did not issue a vision statement, but painted a mental picture using words.¹⁶ President Kennedy did much the same in his one sentence challenge to “send a man to the moon and return him safely to the Earth.” Those simple words encompassed making the US superior in the space race and technically superior in many fields of science and technology. Although leaders have developed and deployed effective visions since the beginning of the civilized world, total quality efforts now include rational steps to facilitate vision development as part of the package in an attempt to achieve results.

One reason total quality efforts use visions is to harness their power to accelerate the change process. Organizations and individuals have a comfort level that is disturbed when change occurs. They naturally gravitate toward the status quo.¹⁷ The quality philosophy is often radically different from the status quo that forces people into new mental models that make them

¹⁵ John Sculley, Odyssey (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1987), p. 100,159.

¹⁶ Noel M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna, The Transformational Leader (New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1990), p.122.

¹⁷ Snyder, “Leadership and Vision,” p. 4.

uncomfortable. The vision statement is supposed to create a powerful image in everyone's mind of a more satisfying future possible if only they embrace this new philosophy.

An effective vision has many benefits. It can be used to bind individuals together toward a common goal. It also can motivate people to work toward a higher goal than they would select otherwise.¹⁸ A vision can give people a sense of purpose and fulfillment in their daily work lives by bringing their efforts into a larger context. It is not surprising that the quality movement has been characterized in almost religious terms. Quality has a powerful emotional appeal decidedly different from the typical carrot and sticks.¹⁹ A vision also can serve as a guiding beacon when things go wrong or you can't see far enough ahead because of the fog of commerce or war.

Several years ago the US Army instituted a process where commanders issued the "Commander's Intent" to field units before the start of an operation. This provides each unit and individual the commander's vision of the future (albeit short term) so they can understand how they fit into the big picture. When things go wrong, or conditions change, individuals and units can seize the initiative by acting creatively and decisively because they can visualize how the current situation fits into their mental picture of the future.

ARE WE DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE VISIONS?

The underlying assumption in total quality efforts is that the vision will be so compelling that it will energize everyone to action. Organizational leaders use it as an instrument of change.²⁰ Its utility is fully realized only if it becomes a common vision shared by everyone. An effective vision is key to developing a quality culture and unity of purpose. Organizational vision

¹⁸ Gary Hamel and C.K. Prahaland, "Strategic Intent," Harvard Business Review (May-June 1989), p. 64.

¹⁹ Kiechel, "A Hard Look," p. 208.

²⁰ Walter Kieshel, "A Hard Look At Executive Vision," Fortune, (October 23, 1989), p. 207.

development seeks to satisfy these requirements.²¹ The effectiveness of total quality vision development and employment can be assessed by analyzing the visions' effect on the target audience.

One target audience for the organizational vision is top management. Typical efforts stress the need to include top management in vision development and to build consensus. The reason given is that each must support actions required to make the vision a reality.²² But, a study of nearly 7,000 people from over 500 organizations show that middle managers are the single strongest barrier to TQM implementation.²³ If participation in vision development and decision making builds support, why would a process exclude those people that are the greatest barrier to implementation? This paper focuses on the effect the vision and vision development have on the entire organization and suggests a reexamination of the essential characteristics of organizational visions and the processes used to develop them. Analysis and assessment of a key part of the total quality package is only a start in the right direction.

Recognized leaders in the quality field point to shortcomings in the vision development and deployment process as one of the reasons quality efforts fail.²⁴ Leadership can be simply described as creating a vision of what the organization is capable of and motivating people to achieve it. Total quality efforts assume top leadership has these inherent skills by virtue of its position. This leads to the typical one day off-site meeting where the senior leaders develop a vision statement and goals and objectives. The better efforts have skilled facilitators that can use their skills to help develop future scenarios that can focus top management's attention. They

²¹ David K. Carr and Ian D. Littman, Excellence in Government (Arlington, Virginia: Coopers and Lybrand, 1993). p. 184.

²² Ibid., pp. 224-225.

²³ George Thompson, "TQM: Forging Ahead or Falling Behind," Forbes, (July, 1993), p. 24.

²⁴ John MacDonald, "Reasons for Failure," The TOM Magazine, (August, 1992), p. 238.

spend much time and effort getting the words “just right” so that the vision statement is catchy and memorable. One of the least motivating visions comes from my own service.

The US Air Force vision statement is “Air Force people building the world’s most respected air and space force... Global Power and Reach for America.” That’s it. I doubt if there is any member of the Air Force that doesn’t think that is a description of today. In fact, “Global Power and Global Reach” have become more of a slogan than an inspiring vision worthy of total commitment. A more insightful vision can be discerned by examining the roles and missions position put forward by the previous USAF chief of staff and the organizational structures he created. The position describes how the Air Force of the future would fit into the battlefield of the future. The organizational structure provides insight into how the Air Force would prepare itself for missions in the future. Once explained, it presents a mental picture that people can identify with that presents significant challenges and opportunities for Air Force members and efficiencies for the American public.

The Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps developed a better Service vision in 1992. Titled “From the Sea: A New Direction for the Naval Services,” this five page document paints a visual picture of the future and the naval services role in it. It is more than a vision statement in that it describes intermediate tasks for the service in order to restructure for the future. The Navy’s vision describes trends and factors that lead up to the probable future and then describes the Naval force’s role in it. This probable future requires “a fundamental shift away from open- ocean warfighting on the sea toward joint operations conducted from the sea.”²⁵ While the Navy’s vision is an improvement over the Air Force’s attempt, it is not clear that this type of broad, all encompassing statement

developed at the highest level in an organization serve to motivate the organization toward higher levels of achievement.

²⁵ Sean C. O'Keefe, et. al., "From the Sea: A New Direction for the Naval Services," Marine Corps Gazette (November, 1992), pp.18-19.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The process of vision development is as important as the vision itself. Conventional methods that require senior leadership to develop an inspiring vision often produce little more than a cute slogan. This is extremely damaging to the success of quality efforts because it only takes the slightest sign of a lack of devotion and commitment by management to divert the organizations attention from continuous improvement.²⁶ The method of development and deployment often fails to motivate members of the organization to achieve higher levels of performance and starts to derail the quality journey as it starts primarily for two reasons. First, the vision is typically developed by senior leadership during an off-site meeting at a well guarded retreat. Most quality efforts, including Quality Air Force, assign the role of vision development to the senior leaders of an organization.²⁷ Leadership can be simply described as creating a vision of what the organization is capable of and motivating people to achieve it. This elegantly simple statement is extremely difficult to execute primarily because a leader must be adept in predicting the future and motivating people to a higher level of performance than they would ordinarily achieve on their own. Assigning vision development as the exclusive domain of top leadership assumes they have all the answers. This is the antithesis of the entire quality culture.

Second, the leaders check off that step in the total quality deployment check list and tell the highly paid consultant to have it printed up on wallet sized cards and passed out to everyone. Advocates of planned organizational change believe this superficial approach overlooks the real purpose of a vision and helps explain why it fails to tear down the cultural barriers to change in many organizations.²⁸ There are several reasons why this approach fails.

²⁶ M.J. Whalen and M.A. Rahim, "Common Barriers to Implementation and Development of a TQM Program," *Industrial Management*, (March/April, 1994), p. 19.

²⁷ Air Force Quality Institute, The Quality Approach, (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, 1994), p. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

The first reason typical vision development and deployment efforts fail to produce results is that individuals do not have a sense of participation or ownership and therefore is often viewed as propaganda. They don't internalize the vision because they did not contribute to the process, and the proposed organizational vision only aligns with their personal visions by chance. Second, the vision is static and does not reflect the need to assess environmental factors continually in the highly competitive and dynamic world business and governmental organizations face today. Third, deployment in the conventional way assumes the organization has a large supply of highly charismatic leaders with almost evangelical abilities that can induce the masses to sign onto a higher calling at will. What is more probably the case is that the empowered workers are subjected to a short term sales campaign by an uninspiring leader who insincerely says that no one is more important than the front line workers while his/her car is parked in a reserved parking spot. The lack of an effective strategic planning and vision development process will likely produce visions that not only fail to motivate people to higher levels of performance, but could also prevent the organization from reaching its potential.

In order for an organization to grow and prosper to its fullest potential, limits and barriers to growth must be removed. The quality movement assumes individuals want to reach their full potential and they could do so if management would stop holding them back.²⁹ Quality literature typically points to a burdening array of regulations, procedures, and attitudes management puts in place as the prime cause of this problem. I can identify with many of these assertions having spent twelve years in the Department of Defense acquisition process. The Vice President's vision for Reinventing Government provides a vision of a more efficient and effective Federal work force empowered to think for itself and do what is smart. It should allow everyone in the

²⁹ Senge, Fifth Discipline, pp. 95-96.

Federal Government to challenge business as usual and work toward the vision. Many in Government, including myself, are watching for indicators that they are really serious before taking calculated risks. After all, the halls of the Pentagon are littered with unread and unused reports from blue ribbon reform panels that promised to change the world. A poor, or non-existent, vision produced using a faulty process can serve to be a constraint on the organization's ability to grow and learn.

A well articulated and understood vision that pulls the organization forward is key to gaining the most from the new management and leadership skills. The "Theory of Constraints" developed by an Israeli physicist, is gaining wide appeal among organizations that want to accelerate the quality process. The theory's premise is that a small amount of time and resources devoted to the elimination of the one thing preventing the process or organization from greatness is better than devoting huge amounts of resources and time against the wrong things. It teaches you how to identify the processes, procedures, or resources that hold any system back from achieving its goal with greater success. The theory relies on a strong, well articulated goal to drive efforts to eliminate constraints.³⁰ The lack of an effective vision will become a barrier to growth and become a constraint within itself. Without an effective vision, the members of an organization may assume the goal of the organization is to continue business as usual. There are few companies that can survive and prosper in the long term under this philosophy. In Government today, declining personnel and other resources without a corresponding decrease in mission responsibility demand aggressive action and new ways of doing business. For those without effective visions, the quality philosophy dictates the problem must lie somewhere in the vision creation and deployment process.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE PROCESS?

A recent Air Force study concluded that "lack of worker motivation" was the #1 barrier to total quality implementation.³¹ Motivating the work force in the 1990's is exceedingly difficult, especially toward organizational objectives that often don't match personal objectives. The perceived lack of job security due to downsizing and increased demands of those that are lucky enough to keep their jobs can demoralize a work force. I was a contracting director at one of the Air Force's four research and development laboratories. Most of the people on the base were losing their jobs due to a decision by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission to realign the base. Although the laboratory was scheduled to remain after thousands lost their job, there were persistent articles and rumors that the laboratory was next to go. This situation, coupled with a yearly reduction in laboratory personnel due to defense downsizing, made it extremely difficult to focus people's attention on striving to achieve an organizational vision requiring years of hard work and dedication to achieve. Unless you aligned the organization's vision with the visions of the individuals within it, you were facing an uphill battle. Worker motivation is one of the most difficult endeavors to understand and appreciate. Success in a quality effort requires a cultural change that can best be accomplished by capitalizing on the powerful forces that motivate people toward behavior necessary to meet organizational objectives. For example, getting managers to stop treating subordinates with contempt and shifting toward a more coaching and empowering role. Fortunately, there is ample research on worker motivation to draw upon, some of which calls into question many earlier total quality prescriptions.

³⁰ Jacob V. Simons, Jr. and Richard I. Moore, "The Theory of Constraints Approach to Focused Improvement," Air Force Journal of Logistics, (Summer, 1992), p. 2.

³¹ Hal A. Rumsey and Phillip E. Miller, "Barriers to Total Quality Management in the Department of Defense," The Logistics Spectrum, (Winter, 1990), p. 4.

If you are going to use a vision to motivate people to higher levels of achievement, then you must understand what motivates people in the first place. The American Quality Foundation developed a program titled "The Stuff Americans Are Made Of" based on a new study of the behavior and attitudes of the work force. Its purpose is to help US companies understand the difference between American and Japanese workers so they can better tailor quality efforts. In other words, don't assume you can take something off the shelf in Japan and expect it to work in the US.

These are some findings:

Unlike Japanese workers, Americans aren't interested in making small step-by-step improvements to increase quality. They want to achieve the breakthrough, the impossible dream. The way to motivate them: Ask for the big leap, rather than for tiny steps.

Change is a threat to Americans when imposed from above, but can be positive if workers feel they can control it.

Whereas the Japanese tend to be methodical and rational in their relentless drive to improve things, Americans are more emotional. To improve quality, it's necessary to get US workers to feel they have a personal stake or are achieving things individually.³²

This study reveals several factors important to effective vision development. First, you should be very careful when adapting something that works well in Japan and transplanting it to the United States. Efforts built on continuous improvement may be a call to action to the Japanese, but they probably would produce only yawns among American workers. An inspiring vision, the breakthrough or impossible dream, is what turns on the American worker. Second, Americans want to be "in on the action." If things are going to change, they want to be involved in the decision making process. It is easier to get Americans to buy into an organizational vision if they were part of the vision development process. Third, for a vision to have emotional appeal, you

³² William D. Marbach, "Quality: What Motivates American Workers?" Business Week, (April 12, 1993), p. 93.

must ensure the American worker has a personal stake in the action. Their personal vision must somehow relate to the organizational vision.

In another study, researchers asked employees in the Fortune 1000 companies which factors contributed to extreme job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The factors that contributed most to job satisfaction were achievement, responsibility, recognition, work itself, advancement and growth. Factors contributing most to dissatisfaction include company policies, work conditions, supervision, salary, relationships, personal life, status and security. The study concluded that people were more motivated by factors relating to employee involvement and participation in the processes that affect them. In short, employees want a feeling of "being in on things."³³ A successful consultant sums it up by stating "People don't resist change. They resist being changed."³⁴ Both these studies confirm what the total quality movement recognizes in its own way, that the best motivation comes from within the individual.

What a vision is has less importance than what a vision does. For a vision to be motivational and inspiring, it must have the following characteristics. First, it must be challenging enough to capture the imagination and desires of the US worker of today. It must stretch the minds and capabilities of the work force toward a worthy future. Second, the vision must be relevant to every individual expected to devote all or part of their working lives. They must make it their own, otherwise the leadership will obtain little or no compliance instead of total commitment.

As mentioned earlier, one way to obtain commitment is to sell the vision to the masses. Unfortunately, you can't always count on an unlimited supply of individuals with evangelical skills like Steve Jobs or Dr King. Classical motivation studies show that participation of individuals in discussions followed by group decisions is more effective than a persuasive

lecture.³⁵ When you couple this with an inherent skepticism of the work force toward total quality (or any other management directed program), the job becomes almost impossible. Businesses and government cannot wait for the future to prove them right. And, an organization can't rely on a crisis to bring everyone together the way the Japanese assault on the auto industry and resulting bankruptcy did to Chrysler. A new approach is necessary to harness the power of the individual and teams to achieve the highest goals.

³³ Kevin M. Paulsen, "Total Employee Involvement - Why Are You Waiting?" Industrial Engineering, (February, 1994), pp. 16-17.

³⁴ Senge, Fifth Discipline, p. 155.

³⁵ John L. Cotton, Employee Involvement, (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1993). p. 8.

IS THERE A BETTER WAY?

The simple answer is yes. Organizations can best motivate their people by enabling them to develop personal visions for themselves and allowing them to participate in the process of developing the organizational vision. By helping people focus on what they want out of life and what they envision is intrinsically important to them, they can better assess how the organization's future has relevance in their future.³⁶ Simply involving people in setting their own goals can produce dramatic results.

Several studies confirm the positive impact of participative goal setting on productivity. In one of these studies, a psychological research group conducted a field experiment in 1988 using a total of eighty Air Force personnel involved in various tasks from repairing electronic equipment to storing and distributing materials and supplies. The researchers obtained productivity measures over a baseline period of 8 to 9 months and then conducted a 10 month experiment where the groups set their own difficult, but attainable goals. Productivity increased between 50 and 75% during the period that they participated in setting their own goals. Job satisfaction and morale also significantly improved.³⁷

The armed forces are experiencing recruiting challenges and difficulty in justifying modernization programs because of the lack of a visible threat. Army recruiting material now stresses the benefits of joining the Army for the skills one can use after the military and money for a college education. This successful campaign aligns advertising to coincide with a vision of the future held by many ambitious young people today. They see themselves as successful in the business world, but do not know how to get there. The Army places itself in this market as a step toward that vision.

³⁶ Snyder, "Leadership and Vision," p. 5.

Organizations can help their people develop personal visions by teaching them to manage what is termed “creative tension.” These are all the variables and obstacles that come to mind once they start to visualize themselves as vice president of marketing or some other position. They must learn how to both recognize and set them aside while developing their personal vision.³⁸ Then it is important to focus on what the person sees as the real benefits of this vision. They can begin by describing what the future looks like and what it means to them. Besides the increased pay, subconscious reasons such as “more control over my work” or “more respect” likely will emerge that can then be applied to both the present workplace and the organizational vision.

By working with individuals to help them learn how to develop personal visions, organizations demonstrate a commitment to personal growth and achievement. It creates a climate where everyone believes you can go as far as your abilities can take you. The process also helps foster a climate where people can challenge the status quo and assumptions about the future. By going through the process in groups, differing views of current reality will emerge and the organization will learn more about itself and its culture. This collective learning process may be the key to meeting the challenges ahead.

Fortune magazine recently reported, “The most successful corporation of the 1990’s will be something called the learning organization ... The ability to learn faster than your competitors.”³⁹ The US automobile manufacturers that learned from the Japanese how to shorten their production cycles, reduce inventories, etc. came out of the recession faster and gained market share. Korean industry learned from the Japanese, while Singapore and Malaysia learned from

³⁷ Ramond A. Katzell and Donna E. Thompson, “Work Motivation: Theory and Practice,” American Psychologist, (February, 1990), p. 149.

³⁸ Senge, Discipline, p. 155.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

the Koreans. The work force of the 1990's is discovering how important the capacity to learn is in their jobs and the organization.

BUILDING A VISION THAT GENERATES A CALLING

How can you create an inspiring vision capable of generating intense motivation in individuals and organizations. The process can be used to teach people how to develop their personal visions. Personal vision development should accompany organizational vision development so the two are interrelated. Personal vision development should be done by individuals with involvement of their spouses if possible. It is important to foster a non threatening environment where people feel free to express ideas and ask questions on virtually any subject relating to vision development. Personal vision development is a soul searching process that can lead to unexpected results.

As individuals develop their personal visions, invariably many will discover that their current job, company, career field, or location does not fit into the vision they intend to commit their entire working lives. A secretary may discover that the clerical field is rapidly shrinking and that the long term prospects are not promising. A corporate graphic artist may realize that the trend in industry is to contract out to small businesses and that starting her own business would fulfill what is important in her life. It is better for the individual to realize these realities early so they can better focus their lives on what is really important to them. If a person's working life is not, and will not, fulfill their personal visions relating to employment, then the organization will not obtain full commitment of their inherent talents and abilities. If vision development is properly done, the organization also will face some unexpected realities.

As the organization goes through the process, it will realize that some business units, departments, career fields, do not exist in the vision. As uncomfortable as it will be, a viable organization must transform to position itself for the future. This will involve active divestiture planning to sell off, decommission, reorganize, reskill the work force to meet this challenge. John Akers, CEO of IBM in the 1980s recognized the dominance software would have relative to computer hardware in the decades ahead. He and his staff created a radically different vision of the company where revenues came from software and systems instead of hardware. The transformation of this huge enterprise was driven by this compelling vision.⁴⁰ There are whole business bookshelves devoted to reinventing corporations that cover this subject. To make that advice relevant, organizations must have a viable vision.

Vision development is not strategic planning. Strategic planning takes what exists today and projects forward. Vision development creates a desired future and projects it backward to the present. An effective way to develop a picture of the future is to create alternate futures. (See Atch 2)

Alternate futures are descriptions of times and places distant in the future based on a range of possible factors. The process includes projection of important events and trends. Some are slow changing phenomena such as weather patterns that affect the amount of arable land in countries. Some are constrained situations. These could include the need for Japan to maintain a positive trade balance because it does not have the resources to support 120 million people who live on four islands. Some events and trends are in the pipeline today. We know almost precisely how many 18 year olds will be available for military recruiting ten years from now. Some are inevitable collisions such as the inability of social security to support the baby boomers under the

⁴⁰ Tichy, Leader, p. 135.

present rules. Examining these types of factors is critical to developing both personal and organizational visions.⁴¹ Alternate future development involves not trying to predict what will happen, but what *could* happen. To be relevant, visions of the future must logically extend from today. It is not as difficult as it sounds and the entire process can be accomplished in a couple of hours. To start the process, your focus group should use brainstorming to identify the important events and trends that could happen in the future. For a government organization, the list might include:

- Overall budget (+/-)
- Discretionary ability to manage to budget
- Mission responsibilities (+/-)
- Military/Civilian work force mix
- Price of items consumed in mission accomplishment (like jet fuel) (+/-)
- Regulatory policy (+/-)
- Environmental policy (+/-)
- Technology relating to mission
- Efforts to contract out all or part of mission

Some additional examples for private organizations include:

- Willingness of people to take responsibility for their actions
(Could increase or decrease product liability damages)
- Tax Policy
(Increases or decreases discretionary income)
- Health Care Reform

⁴¹ Schwartz, Long View, p. 117.

(Increases or decreases a factor that prevents people from changing jobs)

Some additional examples for individuals include:

- Perfection of voice recognition systems

(Eliminates the need for typing skills)

- Increased reliance on decision support software

(Lower skilled people can do work previously requiring higher skills)

- Government requires standard benefit packages that transfer with employee

(Increases ability to change jobs)

- Ability to learn quickly becomes primary hiring criteria

(It's not what you know but how fast you can learn. We must learn how to learn.)

After an effective brainstorming session it is possible to have as many as 20-50 factors listed.

Group these factors into three categories. The first category might be environmental. This could include all factors that effect your freedom of operation. It could include items such as tax policy and government regulations. The second category might be business. This could include demand for consumer goods, industry reliance on subcontractors, and mission requirements for governmental organizations. The third category might be technology. This category could include synthetic fuels and personal communication devices. Although the examples would be different for personal vision development, the process is the same. After the group has categorized the factors, they can begin to build various scenarios.

To build possible scenarios, you must first establish a range of possibilities for each category. The range for environmental might run from more restrictive to less restrictive on your freedom of operations. The business category might run from low relevance of your particular product or service to high relevance in the future. For the technology category, the range might go from

technology development that is complimentary to your core product or service to technology that is counter to your core business or service. Once these ranges are established, it is possible to complete the scenario process.

To complete the scenario process, establish eight possible futures based on all the possible combinations of the three categories. For our example, these futures would include:

More restrictive environment, low relevance of product/service, low complimentary technology
Less restrictive environment, low relevance of product/service, low complimentary technology
Less restrictive environment, high relevance of product/service, low complimentary technology
Less restrictive environment, high relevance of product/service, high complimentary technology
More restrictive environment, low relevance of product/service, high complimentary technology
More restrictive environment, high relevance of product/service, high complimentary technology
Less restrictive environment, high relevance of product/service, low complimentary technology
More restrictive environment, low relevance of product/service, high complimentary technology

Once the group identifies the four alternate futures, it is useful to identify the critical uncertainties that are crucial to your survival and prosperity in the future. How will society view the military if there is not a major conflict in the next 20 years? (Department of Defense) How will real income growth affect people's willingness to pay more taxes. (Treasury, Congress, Budget Office) How will welfare reform affect cultural divisions that exist today? (Social Services) How will rapid development of third world countries affect the environment? (Environmental Cleanup Industry). This process serves as a check to ensure the alternate futures you developed have some relevance to your organizational purpose and the present.⁴² Once complete, the organization now has a framework upon which to build a vision of where they want to be.

To construct a picture of what the vision should be, you start with why you exist in the first place. Examine your purpose for existing. Why are people drawn to work in your organization? Remember that people are motivated by a sense of achievement, responsibility, recognition, work

itself, advancement and growth. The vision should captivate people's imagination and desires so they want to provide the best they have to offer in pursuit of the future. Stories from the early days at Federal Express about people charging jet fuel to their personal credit cards, pawning their jewelry to pay for gas for delivery trucks attest to how powerful a vision can be.⁴³ You want an entire organization of heroes by focusing on bringing out the best in your people.

Next, focus on what you now do best and how you can build upon those strengths in the future. What are the best qualities of what you do? What do the collective talents of your people bring to the futures you built? How can you harness new thinking about the workplace, like total quality or re engineering, to make you more efficient, effective, and relevant?

Finally, focus on what opportunities may arise in the future you can use to your advantage. If the trend toward smaller/flexible manufacturing and virtual companies continues, you may be able to subcontract the lower technology aspects of your product line and concentrate on the higher value-added portions. If the trend toward smaller federal government continues, private charities may pick up a larger share of the social welfare challenge. With less Government regulation, social welfare charities might be able to position themselves as profit making enterprises by obtaining payment for each citizen they return to the work roles. Almost every enterprise can find opportunities through this process they might otherwise miss. As discussed earlier, an easier way to make the vision meaningful and relevant to everyone is by making vision development a shared process.

The most effective way to obtain commitment to an organizations vision is to have the members involved in the process and contribute toward the outcome. Less than 50% of the Fortune 1000 companies share their business plans and goals with employees. Despite the huge

⁴² Ibid., pp. 121-122.

growth in total quality efforts from 1987 to 1990, the number of companies that do so only increased by 2%. Only 28% share information on technologies that may affect them and only 20% share information on their competitors relative performance. How can organizations expect individuals to commit to give their best to a vision if the company does not act as if they have a stake in the outcome?

Developing a shared vision requires first teaching people about visionary thinking and vision development. By concurrently developing their personal visions, people will better understand the purpose and relevance of vision development. To involve individuals in the organizational process, the use of computer networks is probably the most practical solution. You can easily set up a virtual conference that can last for several weeks allowing anyone to participate in discussions and decisions. It will be uncomfortable for leaders as they must bare their soul and may have to admit they do not have all the answers. Anonymous conferencing allows anyone to provide good (and bad) inputs with the help of an on-line facilitator. The facilitator also can keep the conference on track ensuring it meets the objective. Once the vision is developed, it is important that the organization keep it alive.

A vision can be kept alive if the members continually use it as a reference in their daily lives. The leaders should ensure that major decisions are made relevant to the vision by referring to it in policy statements and decisions. As you move into the future, you should periodically assess pertinent factors to see if they have impact on the vision or your alternative futures. Attachment I is a simple example of what this process might produce.

⁴³ American Management Association, Blueprints For Service Quality, (New York, NY: AMA Membership Publications Division, 1991), p. 10.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, an effective vision can be a call to action that energizes individuals throughout the organization to devote their best toward a common dream. To be effective, the vision must captivate the imaginations and desires of the people in the organization. They must visually see themselves better in this future than they are today. They will commit to it if they feel they had a part in creating the vision. It is more than the organization's vision, it is their vision. By concurrently creating their own personal vision, people further associate the organization's future with their desires and aspirations. By keeping the vision alive and relevant as time goes on, it serves to make the vision an institutional pillar toward building a brighter future.

Attachment:

1. Proposed Air Force Vision Statement

THE AIR FORCE VISION

We see an Air Force that attracts the best and brightest this nation has to offer. They are drawn to it by the history, traditions, and the opportunities it provides for growth and personal fulfillment. Fathers and mothers encourage their sons and daughters to join the military because the military is held in such high esteem by society as a whole. The best schools around the nation actively seek Air Force positions for their graduates. We see a similar commitment for those that choose the civil service. Military and civil service members both share the Air Force vision and recognize the unique and complimentary capabilities they each provide.

We see an Air Force where members view themselves as members of the military first and airmen second. They think of themselves in terms of a multitude of skills and abilities. They work in environments where occupational specialties are blurred to the point that almost anyone in a unit can accomplish any task. Creativity and initiative are required as much as personal integrity, loyalty, a sense of duty and honor. Each member views his or her profession as a calling and consistently strives to make the Air Force better each day. Air Force families are a driving force that encourages members to stay in because they share in the draw of the higher calling.

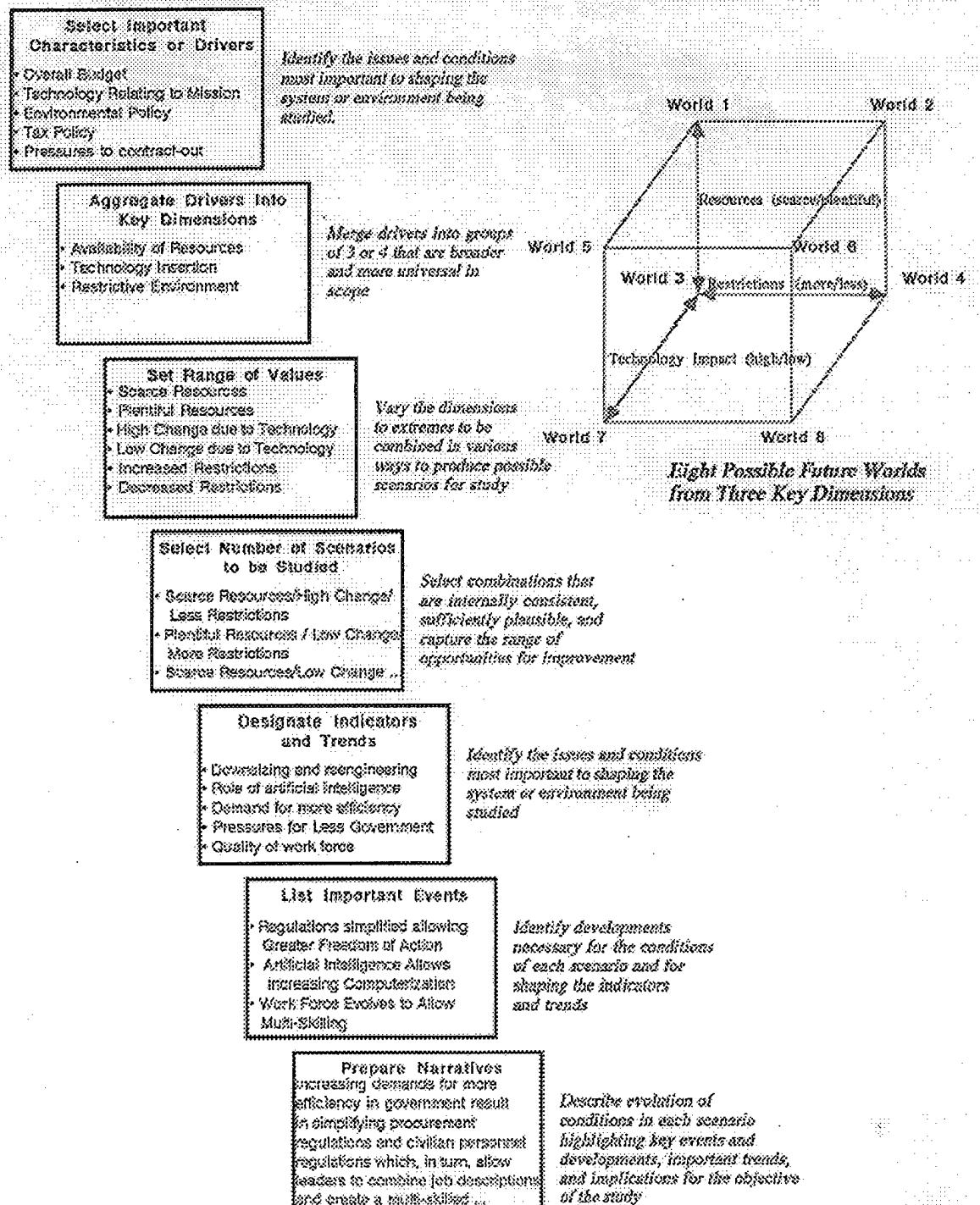
The Air Force is a learning organization that quickly obtains new information and puts it to the best use. It rapidly adapts to changing environments to meet any challenge the nation requires of it.

We see an Air Force that seamlessly blends with sister services to win conflicts quickly with few casualties on either side. The military focuses on removing an opponent's ability to conduct military operations. In operations other than conflict, the Air Force rapidly adapts to meet any challenge with weapon systems and abilities that have dual utility in peacetime and in war.

We see an acquisition system that reacts almost instantly to provide supplies and services that exist anywhere in the world. Developmental programs rely primarily on the private sector for innovation. Industry and the military work through partnerships to quickly tailor these innovations for military applications. Military unique developmental programs are viewed by society as catalysts for industrial growth and development because of spin off applications that benefit society in general and US competitiveness in particular.

We see an Air Force that the American people value for what we contribute to the national security of the United States and to their pursuit of the American dream in their daily lives.

Preparing Alternate Future Scenarios



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